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ABSTRACT

This is an account of the author's experience as a consultant in an elementary school which was attempting to move toward an open classroom approach. A psychologist and child development specialist with public school teaching experience, he defined for himself a twofold objective: (1) to work with principals and teachers to facilitate more open teaching; and (2) to provide the school with diagnostic services through teacher conferences and testing. He sought to design a role which took into account teachers' intellectual, emotional and interpersonal needs: that is, one which helped them gain information, find support, and communicate effectively. His extensive account of the school year should be useful to teachers, administrators, consultants, and others involved in the transition from traditional classrooms to more innovative forms of education. (Author/BP)

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PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSULTATION IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MOVING TOWARDS OPEN EDUCATION

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Elementary school teaching has always been difficult. Demands on teachers' time and energy are many (Jackson, 1968; Moore, 1967). Training is often inadequate for the job (Koerner, 1964; Sarason, Davidson, & Blatt, 1962). The structure of the classroom unit and the milieu of the school make teaching, for many, a very "lonely profession" (Sarason, Levine, Goldenberg, Cherlin, & Bennett, 1966). Particularly for young teachers interested in innovative classroom practice, there are established traditions and administrative obstacles to deal with, usually with little support from anyone else.

The growth of interest in the open classroom as a new model of elementary school teaching has in many ways accentuated these problems and, at the same time, created a whole host of new ones. With its emphasis on meeting the intellectual and emotional needs of individual children, on providing a great diversity of materials and activities, on integrating curriculum areas around projects dictated by children's interests, the open classroom demands a degree of effort, sensitivity, and imagination far greater than the traditional, textbook-based classroom. It is a style of teaching for which few teachers have received formal training, and to which they are likely to encounter resistance from wary colleagues, administrators, and parents. Although there is no dearth of literature on the philosophy and technique of open classroom teaching, there are very few visible role-models for teachers to emulate. Many teachers interested in making the move to open education therefore must do so in what feels to

them like a vacuum, and the transition to the more open approach frequently entails what Schwartz (1974) has called a "growth crisis for the teacher"--a stressful phase of uncertainty and conflict in which teachers need support and help.

During the 1972-73 school year, I had the opportunity to serve as a consultant to a small elementary school in Oldtown, Connecticut, where efforts were being made to move toward an open classroom approach. My experiences there, the rationale behind my work, and the knowledge I gained from it are the subject of this paper. The climate of innovation and change surrounding the open education movement justifies an expanded role for the school consultant, and I hope that my own experimentation with this new role may have some implications for others embarking on consultation in open schools.

I should begin by saying a little about my own background and training and how I came to work as consultant to the Bradley School, for I think it makes little sense to propose a model of consultation without considering the interests and skills of the individual consultant. At the time I began consultation, I was a third year graduate student in psychology at Yale University. My field of concentration was clinical/community psychology and child development, but I also had a strong interest in education. Prior to commencing graduate study I had taught fourth grade for two years in a suburban elementary school outside New Haven, Connecticut, and, in addition to whatever first-hand experience I gained in understanding the role of the classroom teacher and the dynamics of schools, I also developed a strong interest in open education during the time of my teaching. Shortly before beginning teaching, I became aware of a vast outpouring of literature critical of the repressiveness of American public education (Goodman, 1962; Hentoff, 1966; Holt, 1964; Kohl, 1967; Kozol, 1967) and then a trickling of literature hailing the inspiring developments in

open classroom, integrated day teaching which were occurring in England (Blackie, 1967; Featherstone, 1967; Kallett, 1966). Even more of this literature appeared while I was teaching (Brown & Precious, 1968; Gordon, 1970; Kohl, 1969; Pratt, 1970; Richardson, 1969; Ridgway & Lawton, 1968; Rogers, 1970; Silberman, 1970) and encouraged me to experiment with the open classroom approach--to as large an extent as was possible given the limitations in materials, administrative support, and visible role models--of my particular school situation.[1]

I left classroom teaching behind to enter graduate school in the fall of 1970, but continued to take a strong interest in open education. In 1970-71 I did an observation-evaluation study of an experimental open classroom project in a New Haven public elementary school and also spent two weeks visiting primary schools, teachers' centres, and teacher training colleges in London, England. The following year, through a regional educational services agency, I coordinated a series of twelve workshops on practical aspects of open classroom teaching for New Haven area teachers. Together with my wife (a teacher) and a small group of other teachers and parents, I helped organize The Teacher Center in New Haven, which, with foundation funding it ultimately received, has for the past several years served as a resource center--offering a program of workshops, a library, an informal meeting place, and advisory services--for teachers interested in improving their own teaching. I continued to visit schools experimenting with an open classroom approach, in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont, and, through discussions I ran at the Teacher Center on open education, became increasingly aware of the problems encountered and the needs felt by teachers moving towards an open classroom approach.

Thus, by the spring of 1972, when the opportunity arose for a school consultation internship the following school year, I was very interested in working in a school which was making some movement in the direction of

open education. For several years, the Yale Psycho-Educational Clinic had been sending graduate students in psychology into different schools in Oldtown to provide consultation services. As part of my own graduate training in psychology, I had signed up for the consultation internship for the 1972-73 school year, and in discussing a possible school site with the liason person in the Oldtown School System (the town's school psychologist, herself a former staff member at the Psycho-Educational Clinic), I was delighted to learn that one of the elementary schools in town, the Bradley School (a small K-2 school in a middle class residential area) was in fact moving towards an open classroom approach and that the principal there had expressed an interest in having a Yale consultant work in the school.

The nature of the Psycho-Educational Clinic's contract with the Oldtown schools was such that there were no formal requirements or expectations as to the precise kinds of consultative services I might provide. Some graduate students had in previous years helped schools develop special programs (e.g., drug education); others had worked with groups of teachers and paraprofessionals towards the general goal of facilitating staff communication; others had conferred with teachers about "problem children" and provided diagnostic testing services. I would have the freedom to negotiate any type of consultative role in my school which made sense, seemed appropriate, and in some way provided a match between my own interests and the needs of the school.

My interests in consulting were basically two-fold: (1) to facilitate better, more "open" teaching in the school by working with the principal and with the teachers, both in their classrooms and in out-of-classroom meetings; and (2) to provide diagnostic services to the school by conferring with teachers about "problem children" and, when appropriate, doing diagnostic testing. This second goal grew out of

the fact that, concurrent with my consultation internship, I was also doing a part-time internship in psychotherapy at a child guidance clinic and wanted to gain as much experience as possible in diagnostic work in a school setting. I did not view psychological testing as an indispensible part of the school consultant's role in the "open school," although, as I will point out later, the testing aspect of my role did significantly affect the other work I did with teachers.

The needs of the Bradley School were never explicitly stated to me before I began my consultation. The Oldtown school psychologist, who was quite familiar with the school, told me simply that the principal, Mr. C., had never had a consultant in his school before but knew that Yale consultants had worked in other schools in town and wanted to have one. She wasn't clear about what he hoped the consultant might do in the school, except that she knew he would be receptive to my interest in helping the school move toward its expressed goal of open education. She also knew that in this school, as in every other Oldtown school, there were far more children referred for testing each year than she could possibly accommodate herself, so that my interest in doing diagnostic work would also be met with some enthusiasm.

The school psychologist suggested I meet with Mr. C. to discuss the possibility of my working at Bradley the following year, and she volunteered to tell Mr. C. to expect a call from me. When I phoned Mr. C. a few days later, he invited me to visit him at the school the following week. His reception, when I arrived at the school, was warm and cordial. He showed me around the building, pointing out the various innovations which had been made: the block-building and library areas set up in the corridor; the large, open-space room where two teachers were experimenting with team teaching; the flower garden a group of children had planted on the playground, etc. He seemed proud of his

school, but also desirous of whatever help someone like myself might be able to provide. As the school psychologist had predicted, Mr. C. did not have a very precise idea about what specific sorts of activities a consultant would engage in, but he was quite enthusiastic about letting me pursue the general line of work which interested me, and he invited me to come back to the school the following week, meet the teachers, and discuss my consultation plans with them.

When I arrived at the faculty meeting the next week, Mr. C. introduced me to his teachers and allowed me to share with them my ideas about the work I might do in the school the following year. I told the staff a little about my own training and experience and interest in open education, and I emphasized that I was not an expert with all the answers to the problems of elementary teaching but that I would be coming to Bradley to learn and to work together with them in finding ways to improve the quality of education in the school. Mr. C. mentioned that, as part of my role, I would be able to attend the weekly discussion sessions in which teachers were given an hour's released time from their classroom duties to discuss matters of mutual interest. I responded enthusiastically to that suggestion and also said I would hope to be able to confer individually with teachers both within and outside of their classrooms about teaching issues and "problem children." There was only a small amount of time for discussion at this initial meeting, but several of the teachers voiced strong enthusiasm for having me there to help. I told the staff I would be looking forward to meeting them again in September and left the school feeling optimistic about what would ensue.

By the end of that meeting, then, a basic contract for my consultation had been set. What remained for me to work out was the specific nature and focus of my work. Although I didn't have much knowledge about

the particular desires and concerns of the teachers at Bradley, I knew they were interested in open classroom teaching, and I had a number of general ideas from my previous experience in schools about the kinds of needs which are felt by teachers working in an elementary school moving towards open education.[2]

First of all, teachers need information and ideas. The decision to move towards open classroom teaching necessarily forces the teacher to think about new ways to organize her classroom and curriculum. Inevitably, many questions arise. How do I construct different activity or interest areas in my room? How should I arrange the chairs and desks? What new materials do I need to encourage children to work independently? How do I make a pan balance? How can I use Cuisenaire rods? What does a good reading corner look like? What are some successful techniques for helping children to write creatively? How can art activities be integrated with science projects? How do I start weaving in my classroom? How can I keep track of the progress children are making without using class tests? How can I make sure children have a balance of different kinds of learning experiences in school without over-scheduling their day? Can parents help in making materials or serving as classroom aides?

Many teachers beginning to "open up" their classrooms are groping for specific types of transitional moves they can make, but aren't sure how best to proceed. Should they start by having a "free choice" hour during the afternoon and gradually expanding it to fill up more of the school day? If so, what types of provisioning do they need to do to make sure that children work productively and that the "freedom" doesn't slip into chaos? Is it better to "open up" by focusing on one particular area of the curriculum--mathematics, for instance? Then questions arise about what specific types of activities to encourage as alternatives to the traditional textbook, paper, and pencil approach. What kinds of games,

projects, and activities will work? To what extent can children work without teacher supervision? How can projects grow out of children's own interests?

Teachers also have questions about dealing with discipline in the open classroom. Much of the writing on open education suggests that if children are free to talk to each other and move about the room, if they are allowed to be actively engaged in learning about things which interest them, they will be far less bored and therefore less prone to disruptive behavior. There is no doubt some truth to that statement about children, but in any classroom, open, transitional, or very traditional, there is always deviant behavior of some sort, and teachers need ideas on how best to deal with it. Many teachers interested in open education are particularly interested in the whole question of how to set standards and make their expectations clear without being overly authoritarian and dogmatic, and how to deal with "offenders" in a manner which is democratic and humane but also effective. How can "distractable," "hyperactive," and "aggressive" children be helped to make responsible choices and focus on their work without wasting their time and disturbing others? Can some form of behavior modification be utilized with individual children in the context of an open classroom? (Ascare & Axelrod, 1973; Winett, 1973). Can children, through "class meetings" (Glasser, 1969), "group discussion" (Dreikurs, 1968), or other methods, learn to deal with each others' problems so that the teacher is not the only person in the classroom responsible for handling emotional and behavioral issues?

So, teachers moving towards an "open" approach to teaching have many practical questions regarding classroom organization and curriculum, teaching methods, and ways to understand and deal with children's behavior. But, in addition to information and ideas, teachers also need <u>support and</u>

encouragement. Sarason et al. (1966) have emphasized quite accurately that teaching is a lonely profession. It is especially lonely when one is trying out new ideas and experimenting with techniques one hasn't used before. Innovation requires courage, a willingness to venture into the unknown and risk failure. For teachers experienced in traditional, teacher-centered methods of instruction, the move to more "open" teaching frequently involves a fundamental change in professional self-image, which can be quite unsettling. Teachers in open classrooms often feel a need to discuss their classrooms, to receive a little praise for their successes and a little consolation for their failures. They often want sounding boards for their new ideas, colleagues who will sympathize with the rewards and frustrations of the teaching role, offer constructive criticism when appropriate and inspire them to keep trying.

Frequently, however, there are tensions within the social system of the school which compound the difficulties of moving towards a more open teaching approach. In addition to their own self-doubts and uncertainties, teachers may sense some ambivalence on the part of fellow teachers and administrators about how far to go in creating open classrooms. Pressures to experiment with new methods, on the one hand, may be counter-balanced by pressures to keep children quiet and maintain high achievement test scores. Teachers wary about changing their traditional roles and classroom styles may feel pressures to conform to "new ways" they don't entirely agree with. Teachers eager to try new methods may find themselves accused of moving too far too fast. Parents either in support of or opposition to open classroom methods may apply a variety of pressures on the school, and pressures either for or against open education may also be exerted from other schools in the system. Teachers in schools moving toward open classroom teaching therefore need to be attuned to differences of opinion and style, pressures to change,

to not change, and to conform, both within their own school staff and outside the immediate boundary of the school. For change to be effective and smooth, communication must be open, honest, and sensitive. Teachers need to be able to share ideas and resources, respect each other's individual differences, and deal effectively with conflict.

In conceptualizing the nature of my work as consultant to a school moving towards open education, then, I sought to design a role which would take into account teachers intellectual needs, emotional needs, and interpersonal needs: to help them gain information, find support, and communicate effectively. Since, in addition, I was interested in diagnostic work with problem children, the role I envisioned demanded an integration of several different approaches to school consultation.

Part of my role was derived from the traditional psychological examiner model: i.e., dealing with teachers' requests for psychological assessment of individual children who, for one reason or another, are not functioning well in school. As an assistant of the over-burdened town school psychologist, I would receive written referrals, confer about them with the relevant teachers, observe the referred children in their classroom environments and, when appropriate, administer psychological tests. After doing my classroom observations and whatever testing seemed advisable, I would confer again with the teachers, report my impressions of the child's problems and make recommendations for ways to deal with them. Sometimes parent conferences would be necessary and/or conferences with special teachers in the school or outside specialists and agencies.

In this aspect of my consultation, the focus was on the psychological problems of individual children. In Caplan's (1970) terms, the nature of my work was "client-centered case consultation"--i.e., using specialized knowledge to make an assessment of the nature of the client's (child's) problem and recommending how the consultee (teacher) should deal with

the case. Sometimes, when handling a particular child was especially troublesome for a teacher, my role would move closer to what Caplan calls "consultee-centered case consultation," in which the consultant focuses his main attention on trying to understand the nature of the consultee's difficulty with the case and trying to help him remedy this.

From my own experience as a teacher I was well aware of the frequently voiced complaint that school psychologists merely tell teachers what they already know, and that a psychologist's diagnostic report is often little more than a translation of the teacher's referral form into psychological jargon. (Schmidt & Pena, 1964, point out that many teachers feel psychologists' test reports "all say the same thing.") I was committed to making recommendations which would actually help the teachers deal more effectively with the children they referred for evaluation. Sometimes these recommendations would involve relatively simple, straightforward modifications in the teacher's approach to discipline or reading instruction with the child. But other times, more fundamental changes in the teacher's perception of and ways of dealing with the child might be called for. Sometimes evidence of misunderstanding or mismanagement of a particular child might suggest the desirability of far-reaching alterations in the teacher's overall classroom approach. Venturing into such areas of consultation demands a relationship of mutual trust and respect between teacher and psychologist, not the sort of relationship that one builds through formal case conferences and test reports alone. Establishing informal, non-threatening lines of communication, working to get to know teachers and have them get to know me, creating an atmosphere of trust--these became major priorities in my consultative role.

Thus the focus on the psychological problems of individual children merged in many ways with a focus on problems of teachers. Given the proper atmosphere of mutual trust, consultation which was initiated by a teacher's concern over a particular child could quite naturally spread into a more general discussion about the travails and frustrations of teaching, classroom organization, tensions between teacher and principal, etc. Part of my consultative role therefore was to facilitate such discussion and offer support and assistance around the issues which emerged.

Among the models of consultation which inspired me in my work were those of Sarason et al. (1966) and Newman (1967). From both of these writers came an emphasis on building helping relationships with teachers by spending time in their classrooms, chatting informally in corridors, staff rooms, and lunchrooms, letting them talk about whatever concerned them. Unlike Caplan, neither Sarason nor Newman presents an organized theory of consultation or sets forth a guiding set of principles. However, what is striking in reading their descriptions of their work is the attitude and style with which they dealt with teachers in schools: (1) a sensitivity to the pressures and realities of the teaching situation; (2) a willingness to spend time listening to teachers and building an atmosphere of trust; and (3) skill in working cooperatively with teachers to find solutions to a wide range of problems. In Sarason's work in particular I was impressed with the utility of consultant-led teacher discussion groups as vehicles for helping teachers overcome the feelings of isolation, loneliness, and helplessness which so often accompany their work, and I was therefore most interested in incorporating such discussion groups into my own consultative role.[3] The emphasis would be on (1) giving teachers a chance to "ventilate" their feelings; (2) promoting openness in staff relations; and (3) encouraging

cooperative problem solving--i.e., helping teachers see that they have many problems in common and can draw off each other's strengths, skills, and experience to solve them.

Since both Newman and Sarason approached their work with teachers largely from a mental health perspective, they were less concerned than I intended to be with the practical issues of classroom organization and teaching technique. In my informal conversations with individual teachers and in teacher discussion groups I aimed to spend time dealing with a wide range of educational as well as psychological issues. I saw my role not merely as encourager, comforter, and facilitator of communication, but also as provider of in-service training and change agent in the school's movement towards an open classroom approach.[4]

One major consultative role model which influenced my work was that of the Adviser in English primary schools. This is a role which has only recently begun to be introduced into American education--most notably through E.D.C.'s Follow Through and Open Education Advisory Programs (Armington, 1968; Bussis & Chittenden, 1970; EDC News, 1974), through Lillian Weber's Open Corridor program in New York City (Weber, 1972,1975) and through the University of Illinois Fellowship Program for Teacher Trainers in Early Childhood Education (Spodek, 1970; Spodek and Manolakes, 1975)--though it has a fairly long history in the British educational system.[5] In England, the Adviser is typically an experienced classroom teacher, usually a former school head, who works as a "floating" consultant in different schools within his district. Some Advisers are subject specialists (e.g., in mathematics, reading, or art), but many are generalists who attempt to help teachers in a wide variety of areas.

In some of the more innovative Education Authorities in England, where the Advisory role has been stripped of the evaluative function traditionally associated with the "Inspector of Schools" role, the

Adviser's job has primarily become just what its name implies: giving advice--not imposing policies or enforcing standards, not supervising the implementation of pre-established curricula, but, rather, working in a supportive capacity, offering solace, encouragement, and practical suggestions, without threat of reprisal, to teachers. Much of the Adviser's time is spent inside teachers' classrooms, observing what's going on, interacting with children, demonstrating a teaching technique with a small group, bringing in a book, chatting informally with teachers, sharing information on recent developments in other schools. Frequently Advisers organize after-school workshops on specific aspects of teaching in which teachers have expressed an interest--e.g., the new "Breakthrough to Literacy" approach to reading; surveying and graphing in mathematics; environmental and nature studies; ways to involve parents, etc. In addition, they arrange for teachers to visit other nearby schools where they've noticed particularly exciting things happening. Fundamentally, the Adviser's job is, as John Coe, Senior Adviser for Primary Schools in Oxfordshire, put it, "helping teachers to grow," in terms of both skill and confidence in working with children (Coe, 1974).

The diversity of functions which an in-the-classroom Adviser can serve for a teacher was dramatically demonstrated in an interview study by Amarel, Bussis, & Chittenden (1973) of some fifty teachers who had received help from advisers in the Open Corridor program and other American advisory services. Analyzing the interview protocols, the investigators were able to identify thirteen distinct perceptions of the adviser's role. Some teachers emphasized the type of support they could rather passively "take in" from advisers, while others focused more on the mediating function of the adviser in stimulating and modifying their own ongoing thought and activity. The thirteen advisory roles, with examples of the types of support associated with each, are

as follows:

1. "Service/Administrative Agent" (for example, the adviser bringing, making, or ordering materials, acting as buffer with the school administration).

2. "Extension of Teacher" (the adviser working as a "helping hand" in the classroom, providing additional experiences for the children, helping with room arrangement, etc.).

3. "Stage Director/Demonstrator" (offering specific direction, "helpful hints," and criticism, showing how to work with children, how to use materials, set up the room, keep records, schedule the day, etc.).

4. "Diagnostician/Problem Solver" (identifying and analyzing problem areas, advising on specific problems involving children, room, etc.).

5. "Emotional Stabilizer/Stimulator" (reinforcing, praising, boosting morale, listening, "caring," inspiring a sense of group belonging).

6. "Respector of Individuality" (accepting where the teacher is and respecting his/her professional integrity).

7. "Provider of Alternatives" (contributing ideas for the teacher to adapt later; conducting group meetings and arranging workshops for exploration of new ideas, materials, and activities).

8. "Explainer/Lecturer/Theorist" (explicating principles and explaining reasons for specific actions in a theoretical context; providing literature on open education).

9. "Modeling Agent" (providing a model of interaction with children over materials/problems or with other teachers over classroom/school issues, so that the teacher can infer patterns of new behavior).

10. "Appreciative Critic/Discussant/Thoughtful Observer" (discussing matters in depth with the teacher, analyzing the classroom work and expanding the teacher's own framework for evaluation).

11. "Provocative/Reflective Agent" (asking questions to stimulate

thought, helping the teacher to become aware of progress and needs, helping the teacher clarify ideas).

12. "Leader/Challenger/Extender" (stimulating continuing growth, leading teachers to new insights in the teaching/learning process, acting as an "enabler" of the teacher, as the teacher is an "enabler" of children).

13. "Agent of Social/Philosophical Change" (promoting new patterns of relationships among teachers, between teachers and children, between school and parents, and encouraging new priorities in values about learning, individual differences, decision-making, responsibility, etc.).

The varying ways in which teachers view the advisory role point out that (a) Advisers differ from each other in terms of approach, emphasis, preference, and style; (b) Advisers work differently with different teachers, depending on the individual teacher's needs; and (c) Different teachers respond in different ways to the presence and input of advisory help. However, it became clear in the interview data, just as the writing on and my own impressions of the British Advisory experience suggest, that the advisory role can be tremendously influential and helpful to teachers moving towards an open classroom approach.

Two aspects of the Advisory role, beside the important function of offering direct assistance to teachers in their classrooms and in after-school workshops, deserve to be mentioned because I viewed them as essential components of my work in Oldtown. One of these is the amount of time the Adviser spends dealing with the school head or principal. British Adviser John Coe (1974) emphasizes the importance of forming good relationships with the head, checking in with him upon arriving at the school, having lunch together in the local pub, suggesting

a visit he could make to another school which is coping well with a problem similar to one his own school is having, etc. In the British schools of which Coe writes, as well as in American schools, the school head or principal is very often the key to progress in the classroom. Sarason (1971), indeed, describes the principal as "the crucial implementor of change." As chief administrator, decision-maker, and tone-setter in the school, his role in the process of innovation is a central one, and any successful intervention in a school must inclue contact with him. In a school attempting to move towards open education, consultation with the principal can be particularly important because, as Cohen (1972) points out, the transition to a more "open" approach necessarily implies modifications in the traditional administrator's role--"serious and deep attitudinal changes [in] methods of decision-making, input of teachers' ideas into administrative policy,...staff development, and supervision."[6] If teachers are to be encouraged to experiment with new teaching styles, channels of communication between staff and principal must be open. Keeping these channels uncluttered with fears, suspicions, and misunderstandings is often a difficult task, but the psychological consultant or adviser can sometimes be a valuable assistance.

A second aspect of the open school advisory role which deserves special emphasis is the function the adviser serves in keeping teachers informed of opportunities outside their own school to learn more about open classroom teaching. Encouraging teachers to attend workshops at a local teacher center, to hear a pertinent lecture at a local college, to visit an exciting classroom in a nearby school, etc., is an important part of the adviser's job of "helping teachers to grow." Much of the kind of learning a teacher must do to become skillful in open classroom work is simply not available in the school itself. Even if the adviser

organizes workshops in the school, there are many workshop topics that won't be covered and many things that must be seen or studied or done elsewhere. As poster of brochures, announcer of events, recommender of books, and suggester of out-of-school learning activities, the adviser/consultant can do much to broaden teachers' exposure and deepen their understanding of open education.

To summarize the various consultative roles which I sought to integrate in my work in Oldtown, my intent was to focus on three levels of school functioning:

(1) the level of the individual child, through observation and diagnostic testing of children, "case conferences" (Winicki, 1972), etc.

(2) the level of the individual classroom, through advisory work with teachers, both in the classrooms themselves and in out-of-class workshops, discussions, and meetings.

(3) the level of the school as a social system, through consultation with the principal and teachers around issues of staff communication, sharing of resources, problem-solving, and decision-making (cf. Bidwell, 1965; Gallessich, 1972).

Unlike other models of school consultation--some of which focus exclusively on mental health issues (e.g., Berkowitz, 1968; Caplan, 1961; Iscoe, Pierce-Jones, Friedman, & McGehearty, 1967), some of which focus exclusively on educational issues (e.g., the fields of curriculum consultation and teacher supervision)--my aim was to concentrate on both psychological issues (e.g., children's mental health, teachers' morale, and staff communication) and educational issues (e.g., classroom organization, curriculum, and teaching technique).

While the multi-faceted nature of my consultative role stemmed from an appreciation of the great range of needs in open schools and an attempt to integrate several of my own diverse interests in psychology and

education, it also reflected, I now realize, a somewhat naive indulgence in what Sarason (1972) has called "the myth of unlimited resources"--namely, a belief that in spite of the very limited amount of time I had available to spend in the school (two half-days per week), not to mention the limitations of my knowledge and experience, I would be able to make significant changes in the life of the school and move it well along the road to becoming a model of "open education," doing many a thorough diagnosis of problem children along the way. In fact, I do feel that the consultative model I evolved is a valid and workable one, and I do think I was successful in meeting some of the needs of the school, but my experience as a consultant also helped me to realize that real change takes far more time and resources than I had available. I will return to this point later, but in the section that follows I would like to outline some of the specific things I did in my consultation and some of the issues, problems, and achievements which emerged.

In commencing my work in the school, I saw my primary tasks as these: (1) getting acquainted, (2) building relationships, (3) gathering information, and (4) establishing a structure for my consultation.

Since I had already met with the principal and teachers in June, by the time school opened again in September there was a feeling that we knew each other. I showed up at school the day before the children were to arrive, when teachers were getting their classrooms fixed up for the annual grand opening, with the intent of reintroducing myself, trying to see as many classrooms as possible, and wishing everyone good luck. The principal, Mr. C., invited me to join him and his teachers at a nearby restaurant for lunch, and I was made to feel very much a part of the staff. The discussion that first day was relaxed and cordial, and it served to set a tone of friendliness and cooperation which made my entry into the school much smoother than it might have been elsewhere.

Returning to the school the following week, I met briefly with Mr. C. to discuss how I should proceed with my work. (I made it a general policy to check in with him every day I arrived in the school, in part to allow him to keep track of me and know what I was doing, in part so that I could keep in touch with his concerns about the school). I was interested in beginning by doing some informal observations in classrooms and sought his advice on which classrooms to start with.

The school had ten classrooms: one kindergarten (staffed by an older woman who had spent time visiting progressive infant schools in England); a "resource room" for children with special learning problems; four first grade classrooms and four second grade classrooms (two of which were joined together by a movable wall which was opened part of each day to create a large team-teaching space); and one third grade classroom. Very much aware of the limited amount of time I had available, I knew that I could not plan to spend a little bit of time in each classroom each day and be of any use to anybody. A good procedure for beginning, it seemed to me, would be to select a few classrooms to focus on, then gradually spread to some others later in the year. Mr. C. agreed with this idea and suggested that I begin with the second grade rooms. The first grade teachers were all fairly inexperienced and new to the school (all were in their second year of teaching), he pointed out, and probably wanted to be left alone for a while until they "got things organized" in their rooms. It occurred to me that it was precisely because they were young, inexperienced teachers still getting themselves and their classroom routines organized that they might be <u>most</u> desirous of talking things over with a consultant (and, in fact, that later proved to be the case); but I knew I'd get to their rooms eventually and needed to choose <u>somewhere</u> in the school to begin to focus on, so I took Mr. C.'s suggestion and began with the second grade.

Two of the second grade teachers had responded very enthusiastically to me when I first introduced myself to the staff the previous June, so I think I felt most comfortable beginning my work in their rooms anyway. Being a little unsure about how much the school really wanted my help and a little uncertain about my own competence, I felt best starting with teachers who seemed to like me.

Having decided, with the principal's help, where to begin my work in the school, the next question I had to deal with was what I would do. I viewed myself as being in what Glidewell (1959) calls the "observation phase" of consultation--that stage of entry into the social system where the consultant gathers information and gets acquainted with the people, processes, and problems of the setting, in preparation for interventions he may make later. Although I knew I might well take a more active advisory sort of role in their classrooms later, I felt it best to be unobtrusive and relatively passive in my first classroom visits, simply sitting in the back of the room, observing briefly, and then talking about the classroom with the teacher afterwards.

I started by spending about a half hour each in two second grade rooms, then stood in the hallway and chatted another half hour with the two teachers later in the morning when their children went out to recess. Both teachers had much to say to me about the troublesome, troubled, and otherwise difficult children they had in their classrooms that year--much more difficult to handle, they said, than the previous year's group. I was struck by how freely they spoke to me that first day about the frustrations of their classrooms. Both teachers seemed to want me to feel sorry for them, and I quite willingly gave them the sympathy they sought. The somewhat apologetic tone of their description of things they were doing in their classrooms made me feel that they were perhaps afraid I would think their rooms weren't "open" enough, and I think they

needed to tell me about how "difficult" their children were in order to justify the rather traditional teaching methods they were using. They asked me how they might begin to use "activity corners" in their rooms, and I suggested starting with one corner in a curriculum area with which they felt comfortable--math, for instance--and letting a few children at a time work independently there. I tried to make it clear that I sympathized with how difficult it is working with children who have behavioral problems, but also tried to offer practical suggestions, when requested, to help them think about ways they could "loosen up."

In a subsequent visit to the school a week later, I devoted nearly the entire morning to one second grade classroom. The teacher was meeting at a table in the back of the room with a small reading group when I walked in, while the rest of the class was engaged in a variety of different activities around the room. While she was carrying on with her reading group, she asked me if I'd "look at" a few of the boys in the class about whom she was concerned. It's difficult to do passive, unobtrusive observation in a class following a more-or-less-open approach, since children are allowed to get up out of their seats and carry on conversations with visitors. I had expected, therefore, to do some talking with children about their work, float around the classroom to get an overview of the activities in progress, etc., but with the teacher's request to pay particular attention to a few specific children, I now had even more reason to interact actively with the children and get acquainted with their classroom. My procedure was to walk around the room, sit next to people engaged in various projects, and ask them about what they were doing. In dealing with the particular individuals singled out by the teacher for scrutinization, I tried to function both as an observing clinician and as an advisory teacher. One child, for example, told me a poignant

little story about how he was going to miss his birthday this year because his family was moving to a new house and his father had told him that the new house would have to be his only present. While keeping an ear open for diagnostic information about the child's emotional concerns, I also sought ways to use these concerns as vehicles for teaching. Thus, after talking with the boy for a few minutes about his family and his house, I asked him if he might want to draw a little picture of his new house and, when he had done so, helped him write a short story about it. When I had first approached this child, he had been working, quite half-heartedly, on a language exercise on the blackboard, and had been quite distracted from his work by other children in the room. By talking briefly with him, I was able to provide him a far richer and more meaningful language experience than the "board work" exercise. My hope was that my interaction with him might serve as an illustrative example to the teacher of one of the most fundamental yet difficult concepts in open education: how curriculum can grow out of children's actual interests and concerns. In other words, I was trying to combine in my role both the function of the psychological examiner who observes the child in his classroom environment and the function of the adviser who, from time to time, engages in some sort of teaching in the classroom to demonstrate to the teacher how it can be done.

I followed this approach of modeling the building of curriculum from children's interests with several other children in this classroom and later in other classrooms as well. Two girls in the team-teaching classroom one morning approached me with a cardboard construction they had made, and I told them its shape reminded me of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. They had never heard of St. Louis, so I asked them if they had a map in their room, and when they found one we looked for St. Louis on the map and had a good discussion about the shape of the arch and the difference

between a city and a state. When I left them, they were quite involved in finding other cities and states on the map, and I felt I had done a good job of drawing some social studies, in a meaningful way, into the art project they had shown me.

For all my satisfaction with interchanges like this one with individual children, I was somewhat uncertain about how well my efforts would be appreciated by the teachers. As a new-comer to both the school and the advisory role, I was more than slightly apprehensive about whether my teaching activities might be viewed as somehow competitive with the classroom teacher's role. I knew that in England the Adviser at least has the legitimacy of his formal status (a relatively highly paid official of the local school system) helping to mitigate against teacher resentment. My fear was that my own status as a young, unpaid outsider might make it easy for teachers to feel I was trying to "out-teach" them in their own classrooms, and that instead of informing or inspiring them with new teaching ideas, I might simply alienate them. When I would recount to a teacher what I had done with a particular child, therefore, I tried to be especially sensitive to the possibility that my own enthusiasm about something I had learned from or done with the child might be resented.

In fact, the teachers' responses to me in no way indicated that they felt any resentment about my interventions with their children, and they generally seemed quite interested in hearing what I had to say about individual children and teaching strategies. The fear that teachers might see me as more competitive than helpful nonetheless persisted in my mind, however, and though I continued to work with individual children in a quasi-teacher capacity during my informal classroom visits, it was actually with a certain amount of relief that I soon began getting involved in psychological testing outside of the classroom.

I had no doubt that the teachers were grateful to me for working with children in their classrooms, but I often felt the teachers were more interested in showing me how strange and difficult the children were than in looking at what I did with the children as a teaching strategy they might also employ. When I learned in a discussion with Mr. C. that there were a few children in those second grade rooms with whom he felt testing should be undertaken, I agreed to do the testing. At the time, I felt my motivation for doing the testing was primarily to gain diagnostic experience, but I later realized, in retrospect, that having my time diverted into testing was in some ways a respite from the awkwardness, doubts, and fears I was beginning to feel in my in-class advisory-teacher role.

As it turned out, the testing itself did a great deal to establish my credibility among the teachers and build up my own sense of competence and "belonging" in the school. Taking individual children out of the classroom to a testing room, administering a battery of psychological tests, writing up a report: this was a function no one else in the school normally provided. Taking over that function was therefore not in conflict with any one else's role, as being a "second teacher" in classrooms often seemed to be. Teachers initiated requests for testing with children they found particularly baffling or troublesome, and having someone like me take their request for help seriously and offer new insights on the referred children was genuinely appreciated. To me, at the beginning of my term as a consultant, it felt much more comfortable responding to these explicit requests for help than it had felt as an adviser floating from classroom to classroom in search of things to observe and children to interact with.

Moving into a testing role did not mean moving out of a classroom observer/adviser role, though; it simply meant redefining the function

of my observations. I explained to the teachers that to do a good psychological evaluation, it was helpful to observe the referred children in their "natural" classroom environments as well as in the artificial environment of the testing situation. In the course of each evaluation, then, which normally spread out over four or five days, I would pick the child up in his classroom and return him after the testing session, spending a few minutes of each visit to observe him in the context of the flow of activities in the classroom. In addition, I would frequently make more prolonged observations on days when I was not testing.

Often during these observation periods it was possible to chat briefly with the teacher not only about the child being tested but also about other issues that came up. The longer I spent in the school, the more teachers tended to confide in me about general problems in their classrooms. Walking into one teacher's room to pick up a boy for testing, for instance, I noticed that she had acquired some hamsters and that a couple of boys were standing by the shelf on which the cage was kept playing with the little animals. I remarked that it was nice to see living animals in school, and she told me she thought they were just creating a lot of trouble. Children were fighting over who could play with them, one boy handled them very roughly and seemed likely to harm them eventually, and they were so much bother to feed and to clean, she explained. Moreoever, she didn't really see how the kids were learning anything from them anyway. I asked her why she had bought them, and she said she had read that open classrooms always have animals in them and thought it would be a good idea, though she now thought they were more trouble than they were worth. We discussed ways she might have children make a schedule to take turns playing with the animals and feeding and cleaning them, and then I threw out some ideas about how she might try to use the animals to enrich her curriculum: for example, children could weigh and measure the animals and graph the changes

that occur as they get bigger (math); they could write down words describing what the hamster feels like and how it moves, eats, sleeps, etc. (language; scientific observation); they could make pictures of the hamsters, build three-dimensional models, or construct ramps and runways for the cage (art). The teacher was very receptive to these ideas, and we were able to have interchanges like that quite often, interspersed, of course, with discussions about the children I was testing and how they were doing in her class.

Frequently, at the conclusion of testing, I would have recommendations to make about an individual child which might have implications for the general structure and organization of a teacher's classroom. Depending on the needs of the particular child, I might advise that the teacher attempt to spend time talking privately with the child each day, to give him a chance to talk about some of the emotional problems he was keeping pent up; or that the teacher have the child read aloud with another girl in the class in order to begin to disassociate her slowness in reading from a fear of disapproval from adults; or that a child weak in abstract reasoning but having strengths in manual skills be given extra opportunities to build models in class. More than once the recommendations made for a particular individual had relevance for other children in the class as well, but even when they did not, my feeling was that the recommendations growing out of psychological testing of individual children were instrumental in moving the teachers towards a more "open" approach in their classrooms to the extent that they helped teachers understand that children have different individual needs, abilities, and concerns and should therefore receive individualized teaching.

To sum up, then, psychological testing served a multiplicity of functions: it alleviated some of my own anxiety around the more diffuse role of adviser/observer I had been playing and allowed me to do more

focused observations in the classrooms; it helped build relationships between myself and the teachers and thereby enhanced my credibility as a consultant; it provided a vehicle for me to make recommendations about classroom practice which frequently transcended the particular situation of the individuals being tested; and it contributed to my overall effort to help teachers develop more "open" classrooms by pointing out the variety of individual needs of children.

Another function which the tester role served was to help me gain access to new classrooms in the school. As noted earlier, I was advised by the principal to begin my work in the second grade classrooms, and initially my testing referrals came exclusively from these rooms. I soon was asked to test a little girl, new to the school, who had started the year in second grade but appeared to be quite immature for her age and had consequently been put on a schedule which had her spending half of each school day in a first grade room. Since my policy was always to observe referred children in their classrooms, I arranged to visit the first grade room to observe the child's behavior there and discuss her situation with her teacher. Through an informal staffroom chat with this teacher about the girl I was testing, I managed to get acquainted as well with the other first grade teachers who had seen me around the building but hadn't really gotten to know me yet or find out what I was doing. Soon referrals for testing began coming in from other first grade rooms.

I found these young first grade teachers even more willing to talk openly to me about their teaching problems than the second grade teachers. Testing referrals provided a reason to invite me to their classrooms, but once I was there, the teachers were eager to discuss difficulties they were having with classroom management and curriculum.

As useful as the brief classroom consultations were, however, their

impact was necessarily rather limited, and they also did little to further my goal of facilitating intra-staff communication. An important part of my work, therefore, centered around the weekly, hour-long, grade level staff meetings which the school principal had invited me to attend. The structure for these meetings had been established by Mr. C. during the year prior to my commencing work at the school. For one hour each week, all the teachers in a given grade were relieved of their classroom duties and met together in the staff room. Parent volunteers were recruited to supervise the children during that hour, usually in outdoors play. The purpose of the meeting was multifold: to give teachers a "breather" time each week when they could, during regular school hours, get away from the demands of their children and talk together about problems of mutual concern; to provide an occasion for the principal to discuss curricular or other matters with the teachers; to create a vehicle for encouraging parental involvement in the life of the school. Mr. C. had told me about these meetings when I first met with him in the summer before I began my consultation, and he made it clear to me that I would be welcome to utilize the meetings for whatever workshops or discussions I might want to have with teachers. Due to delays in rounding up a sufficient number of mothers to cover all the classrooms during meeting time, it was several weeks into the school year before the first of the meetings actually took place, but they soon became a regular occurrence and a central part of my work in the school.

The nature of my own role in those meetings took some time to evolve. Although Mr. C. was no doubt very sincere in encouraging me to utilize the meetings to run workshops and discussion sessions with the teachers (he in fact made a special effort to schedule the meetings for precisely the two days of the week on which I visited the school), I at first felt like some-

what of an ancillary figure in them. Mr. C. frequently served as chairman in the meetings, starting the sessions by making some announcements, then instigating discussion on some topic like discipline and occasionnally asking for my "expert" opinion. I would usually try to give an honest answer to whatever was asked of me, though I often had to point out that there are no simple answers to such questions as, "Why don't children respect their teachers today as much as they used to?" and that I really wasn't an expert and wondered what observations the teachers had made about the issue. I would have been quite uncomfortable in the role of "guest expert on child psychology" if I had been put into that position continuously, but fortunately I was usually successful at diverting attention away from me and encouraging teachers to share ideas among each other.[7]

In a good many meetings, Mr. C. stayed for only a few minutes or failed to show up at all, and, not surprisingly, the teachers generally seemed more comfortable talking about classroom problems when he was not present. As Sarason (1971) has so clearly pointed out, the role of the principal is often seen by teachers as a judgmental and evaluative one, however sincere the principal may be in his desire to help rather than condemn teachers. This situation certainly applied in the Bradley School, and there was a noticable sense of relief among the teachers on those days when Mr. C. left early, and a far greater feeling of involvement and openness on the days when he didn't show up at all. I have no doubt that he felt as uncomfortable being there in the meetings as the teachers felt having him there, and it was therefore not altogether surprising that he spent so little time in the meetings which he himself had gone to some lengths to set up. Of course, there were other reaons which made it difficult for him to attend the meetings. As if being principal were not enough responsibility, Mr. C. was also supervisor of elementary edu-

cation for the town and therefore had a double load of administrative work to attend to, including a busy schedule of conferences which often took him out of the school building. However, I am now quite convinced that above and beyond the problem of his busy schedule, Mr. C. welcomed the opportunity to have someone else--namely me--take responsibility for the staff meetings.

Occasionally Mr. C. would show up and use the meeting time to discuss some pressing administrative matter with the teachers--e.g., procedures for an upcoming round of reading and math achievement tests--and occasionally the meetings would be unexpectedly cancelled at the last minute due to parent volunteers being unable to come for the day to supervise the children, but for most of the school year I was able to look forward to spending an hour each Monday meeting with the first grade teachers and an hour each Friday meeting with the second grade teachers to discuss matters which they wanted to discuss.

There were times I worried that the teachers might see me as a surrogate principal in the meetings and project onto me some of the feelings of resentment and/or fear they felt toward Mr. C. I had, in fact, been introduced to them by their principal; they hadn't asked for me. I was, moreover, the only other male in the school (barring the custodian, that is), and in elementary schools maleness often seems to carry with it a certain amount of power and authority whether one is actually in a position of formal authority or not.

One of the issues I had to contend with, then, in working with teachers in the staff meetings was the issue of authority. Stepping into a situation where there was a tradition of having meetings planned and dominated by the principal and at least the potential for seeing me in some way as an agent or representative or substitute for the principal, I necessarily had to wait some time until the teachers began to see that

the meetings really were for them, that they could determine what would go on in them, and that they could talk openly about their gripes and frustrations without fear of reprisal. To encourage the teachers to speak freely in the meetings, I had to build their trust in me as someone who was available to help them, not as an authority figure. I also had to build their confidence in their own ability to help themselves.

Ultimately one of the major goals I saw for myself in the staff meetings was to develop a stronger feeling among the teachers that they could serve as helping resources for each other. That did not mean, though, that I could not take an active role in the meetings, as facilitator of discussion, encourager, source of ideas, etc. If the teachers were to see themselves as a support group for each other, I felt, they needed to experience the staff meetings as truly supportive and helpful, not just as pleasant, hour-long breaks from the routine of teaching. In order for the meetings to reach a point where they could continue on their own successfully without me, I needed to work actively to build up a momentum of productive work in the groups.

For me, that task involved a delicate balance between consultant as expert and consultant as non-directive facilitator. Although I did not want to get myself into an authoritarian position in the staff groups, I nonetheless recognized that I did have a legitimate function as an authority (of sorts) on child psychology, group dynamics, and open education. My long-range goal, in the spirit of Alinsky (1971), was to make myself obsolete--i.e., to build up the base of knowledge, skills, and self-confidence the teachers needed to function well without a consultant. I knew, after all, that I would only be able to work in the school for one year, and that it would be unfair and counter-productive in the long-run to make the teachers dependent on me. I was aware of the fact, often stressed in the literature on consultation (e.g., Caplan, 1970), that

the basic function of a consultant is to help develop the resources within the consultee group which will allow it to deal better with problems arising in the future, long after the consultant is no longer available. But I also knew that I had some knowledge and skills worth sharing with the teachers and that it would make little sense not making myself available to them. It would, for example, be insincere and unhelpful to pretend not to know the answer to a question about math curriculum if I did know the answer. Aside from whatever value the specific information I offered might provide, the whole process of information-seeking and responsiveness to inquiry in which I participated could serve as a valuable model for future teacher growth.

I have often felt that one reason curriculum remains so stagnant and repetitive in schools is that teachers feel they can't--or shouldn't--or daren't--ask other teachers how they handle specific problems in the classroom. For whatever reason--fear of appearing unknowledgable or incompetent, professional jealousy, or feeling that one's own problems are unique and that no one else would understand them anyway--teachers all too seldom ask each other for help. My intent in the staff meetings was to create an atmosphere in which teachers did ask for help--not only from each other, but also from me--and in which they received it.

Over the course of the year I worked in the school, the group meetings moved through a number of phases. For several weeks, the topics of discussion tended to be either abstract and generalized or focused on specific individual children. One second grade-level meeting, for example, dealt with general problems of discipline, and teachers related anecdotes about children ridiculing, making fun of, and fighting with each other. In another meeting, this time of first grade teachers, the general issue was the inadequacy of the school's reading and math program, and the anecdotes centered around children who find the basal

readers and the math books too difficult and then feel inadequate or act up in class because of their frustration. Teachers in both grade levels were very concerned about "disruptive," "hyperactive," or "disturbed" children and seemed to relish the opportunity to discuss their experiences with these children. Occasionally, someone would have a suggestion for dealing with a specific "problem child"; occasionally, I would be asked to observe and/or test the child in order to shed more light on the problems involved. But the opportunity to simply talk about the children and to hear similar tales of woe from their colleagues seemed to be very valuable to the teachers, even if solutions weren't always forthcoming.

Eventually, the teachers began to express an interest in working on specific curriculum areas. All of them, however "traditional" or "open" their classrooms were, wanted to know more about how to "individualize" their teaching. For some teachers, the question came up in the context of discussing reading groups and what to do with the rest of the class while one is meeting with a small group. Other teachers were specifically interested in classroom games--how to make them and how to use them. Others had more general questions about how to "open up" their approach to language and mathematics and how to base their teaching more on active involvement of children and integration of subject areas. What emerged from our discussions was a plan for a sequence of workshop sessions to be held in the regular meeting times to deal with some of these curriculum issues.

For the first several workshops, I brought in a variety of home-made materials and some examples of children's work (mostly from my wife's classroom, although I could have borrowed them from another teacher), in order to demonstrate some concepts and activities which the teachers might want to make use of in their own classrooms. In the math session, for instance, I

focused on the use of manipulative materials and such activities as weighing, balancing, surveying, and graphing to integrate the development of computational skills with the child's exploration of his school environment. I brought in a large balance scale I had made from scrap lumber and old pie tins, geoboards (for use in simple geometry) made from plywood and rows of nails, and an enormous pictorial graph charting the results of a survey taken by a child in my wife's second grade class on "how many children have pet rabbits, hamsters, dogs, cats, fish, turtles, or other animals." I also brought in an excellent series of math curriculum guides from England (the Nuffield Foundation math books, now distributed in the U.S. by John Wiley) which provide many illustrations of ways math can be taught through active projects.

After showing the teachers what I had brought in, I engaged them in discussion on how they might experiment with similar types of materials and projects in their own rooms. Plans were made to spend a few sessions constructing home-made curriculum materials and to solicit parents to make multiple copies of them so that they'd be available in ample supply. (Two particularly committed parents in fact ultimately spent many hours in the school making classroom games and blank books for children's creative writing.) Later in the school year, two of the teachers brought in a vast array of educational games and materials they had made in a course at the local teacher's college and shared with the rest of the staff how the materials had been constructed and how they were being used in the classroom. At many points during the year, teachers would mention a game or a material they had heard about, ask if other teachers had tried them, or bring in some new thing or idea which had worked well in their rooms and seemed worth sharing.

By mid-year, a spirit of cohesion and openness had grown up within the two teacher groups, and the range of issues discussed broadened widely

beyond curriculum. As the teachers got to know me better, they began to raise an increasing number of concerns about problems relating to staff communication and their relationship with the principal. (All of these discussions took place on days when Mr. C. was absent from our meetings.) One issue that became clear was that the general level of trust within the school was extremely low, and that resentments and suspicions of some magnitude were being harbored by various individuals and groups within the staff. Among the second grade group, there were strong feelings that the principal continued to feel very critical of them for their action during a teachers strike which had taken place the previous year. The strike had lasted just three days, and though Mr. C. reportedly had been in sympathy with its objectives (for higher pay), the teachers believed he still felt personally betrayed, hurt, and angered by their participation in the strike action. The first grade teachers, most of whom had not actually participated in the strike, also reported a sense of being mistrusted, disliked, and unfairly treated by the principal. Both groups saw him as unpredictable, unreliable, and suspicious. They described incidents of his acting supportive at times to an "open" approach to teaching, but then abruptly yelling at children for talking in the corridors or reprimanding teachers for not adhering closely enough to the school system's basal reading program. They also saw him as being arbitrary and prejudicial in his allocation of classroom materials in the school. The first grade teachers felt particularly strongly about this, claiming that Mr. C. had been ignoring them and their interest in more "open" teaching and had channeled most of the new manipulative materials, games, and equipment acquired by the school into the second grade rooms. Even within the second grade staff group there was a feeling that the two teachers working cooperatively in the large "open space" room had been given preferential treatment over the two teachers

working in self-contained classrooms. Collectively, the four second grade teachers all felt that the most preferential treatment had been given to the one third grade teacher in the school (who usually attended the second grade staff meetings). This teacher was perceived as the principal's "favorite" or "pet," and it was remarked that his positive feeling toward her stemmed from the fact that she had crossed the picket line during the strike and had taught while her colleagues stayed off the job.

Although I had not anticipated such strong competition over resources, I was pleased when the issues of staff relationships were raised in our group meetings, because my feeling was that it was only through recognition and open discussion of such problems that they would ever be satisfactorally resolved. My role at the outset was to listen to the teachers' remarks, to clarify ambiguities, to sort out irrational anxieties from realistic conflicts. Discussion was generally lively, animated, and open. Eventually, I began urging the teachers to come up with ways to resolve some of the problems they had been discussing. "Why not approach the principal directly?" I asked. "Let him know how you feel. Tell him about the inconsistency you sense in his support for your efforts to move towards more "open" teaching. Suggest ways you think resources could be more equitably distributed in the school." But the teachers all seemed convinced that to bring these issues out into the open with Mr. C. would only make matters worse. "He won't change," they told me. "That's just the way he is. He's a stubborn man. We've tried before."

Despite several hours of discussion about different strategies they could utilize to reduce tensions in the school, the teachers seemed to feel resigned to the inevitability of poor communication with their principal. Interestingly, the principal, with whom I had also been consulting

individually, seemed to feel a similar kind of resignation. He was, in fact, still embittered over the previous year's strike and doubted how much he could ever trust his teachers. He also expressed some doubts over the competence of his first grade staff and whether it was worth going to any lengths to work more closely with them. But more importantly, perhaps, he was beginning to have some serious doubts about his own competence as a principal and confided to me that he sometimes felt he was just not very good at the job.

What came through from my discussions with both Mr. C. and his teachers was a feeling of hopelessness about their relationship and a sense that, upsetting as it was, nothing could be done to improve it. Being privy to confidential information from both individual teachers and Mr. C., I found myself in a very sensitive position, though I never felt any pressure to serve as mediator. No one ever asked me to pass messages, put in a good word, or argue a point of view with anybody else, however much it may have been their fantasy that I might do so. But I was clearly seen as a shoulder to cry on (or at least an ear to complain to) by all parties. What I found disappointing was their unwillingness--or inability--to move beyond complaining, blaming, and mutual incrimination to constructive action. By the end of the school year, although I felt I understood the social/political system of the school much better, I hadn't helped to change it as much as I had hoped I would.

Part of the reason for my lack of success in lessening staff tension was clearly a matter of time. Despite my understanding of and agreement with Sarason's (1971) point that efforts to undertake change must be made with an appropriate time perspective, I realize now that I somehow believed that all the tensions and misunderstandings that had been accumulating within the school staff for at least two years could be resolved and smoothed over in a few weeks. Building a helping relationship in which

serious and threatening issues can be openly discussed takes a great deal of time. Creating an atmosphere in which people will be willing to take the risk of confronting each other because they trust each other sufficiently to believe that the confrontation is worth the effort--that takes even more time. I simply was not available in the school long enough to achieve the kind of breakthrough I would have liked to see.

Another reason I think real changes in teacher-principal communication did not occur is that at some level the staff seemed to need the tension and hostility which existed. It has often been said that Israel would fall apart from intramural conflict were it not for the constant threat of war with the Arabs which holds its sparring domestic groups together. Focusing so much of their energy on how to deal with Egypt and Syria, the Israelis have less time to devote to resolving the many complex internal issues which have long plagued their country. In a way, I think the teachers in the Bradley School played Israel to Mr. C's Arab. By focusing their dissatisfaction on him, by seeing him as the cause of their problems, they felt less responsibility for resolving their own differences with each other. There was little use in confronting him directly because he was viewed as unconfrontable; doing so would only make him more hostile (cf. the popular Israeli view that "there's just no way to get through to an Arab."). Yet by continuing to talk as if everything would be fine if they could only reach a better understanding with their principal, they spared themselves from having to deal directly with the jealousies and hostilities they felt towards each other. (The teachers could have worked out ways to share curriculum materials more equitably among their various classrooms, for instance. There was no reason to believe that the mere fact that Mr. C. gave a new set of math blocks to one second grade teacher meant he would ob-

ject if she shared them with the other second grade teachers or even with the first grade teachers. Some sharing was, of course, done, but much more time was spent complaining about who was given more than whom than on working out ways to redistribute what there was.)

The notion that social systems, however wrought with difficulties and dissatisfactions, tend to stay the way they are because they need to--i.e., because an equilibrium has been established which maintains a certain stability all the members of the system desire--is certainly not a new one. Indeed, the organizational literature is full of descriptions of the process by which systems resist change (e.g., Bennis et al., 1961, 1969). Nonetheless, I do feel that, with the help of a consultant such as myself, some change, some opening up of new channels of communication and understanding, could have been possible at the Bradley School, given additional time. I was naive to think I could make a great deal of headway in the few months I had there, but I think that some definite progress towards recognizing the nature of the staff relations difficulties was made and that further progress could have resulted from my continuing on in the school another year.

Looking back over what I was able to achieve in my nine months' work in the school, I think there were a number of real accomplishments: I certainly had been helpful with the dozen or so individual children I evaluated. I provided a useful service to teachers and the principal by spending time talking with them, listening to their problems, and offering advice. The workshops I organized for the teachers had visible pay-off in terms of projects they then carried out with their children, as did the idea-sharing and materials-making sessions I encouraged them to have for themselves. At one point during the year I gave a talk to the school P.T.A. on the theory and practice of open classroom teaching, which I know was appreciated for clarifying to wary parents what it was the teachers were

trying to do in their sometimes offbeat-looking rooms. At the end of the year, at Mr. C.'s invitation, I helped plan a series of eight workshops on different aspects of open classroom teaching which would be offered to teachers in all Oldtown elementary schools the following year. Although Mr. C. was willing to let me organize those workshops myself, I convinced him that it would be wiser to include his teachers in at least the selection of topics for the workshop series and arranged a meeting involving the Bradley teachers, Mr. C., myself, and the coordinator of the New Haven Teacher Center, during which topics were selected for the series by matching what the Teacher Center had to offer with what the Bradley teachers felt they needed. This series, covering mathematics, language, science, and creative dramatics, was held as scheduled the following year and was reportedly very well received.

Despite these real achievements in my consultation, though, I nonetheless felt some frustration that more was not accomplished. I had had visions, when I first began my consultation, of the school being well on its way to becoming a model of open classroom teaching by the time I left it, and it was not. There are several reasons for this. One, of course, is the point I have already stressed--that systems are naturally resistant to change, and that significant change takes a lot of time. Another reason, though, is something I have come to realize only recently, with some reluctance, and after visiting more than fifty British primary schools as part of my doctoral dissertation research during the year after I left Bradley School: that good open classroom teachers are extremely rare, and that entire schools functioning with open teaching in the classrooms and open communication between teachers and administrators are even rarer. I do not mean to suggest that open classroom teachers are born and not made. But I do think that there is only a limited amount a consultant can do to "open" a school if the es-

sential elements of "open" teaching are not already present in the school:

(1) sound training in child psychology, with an emphasis on both emotional and cognitive development, and a warm, intuitive style of relating to children in ways which encourage them to learn independently.

(2) an appreciation of how to diagnose the individual educational needs of children and to design educational activities at an appropriate developmental level to meet those needs.

(3) opportunities to learn from other open classroom teachers, by visiting their schools, exchanging ideas and techniques at workshops, etc.

(4) ongoing, daily support from a school head (principal) who also is knowledgable in child development and curriculum and who is willing to take the time to observe and advise teachers and to create an atmosphere in which they feel free to experiment and to learn themselves.

(5) a willingness to work very hard.

Needless to say, it is quite difficult to find schools where all these elements are present--even in England, which has gained a reputation for widespread implementation of open classroom practices. What one often finds in schools lacking in one or another of these elements is a style of teaching which differs from traditional teaching only in its trappings. The furniture may be arranged differently; there may be some interest areas and a lot of noise in the room--but children may still be pushed routinely through a standardized curriculum without real regard for their interests and concerns, or, conversely, may be left entirely to their own devices on the mistaken assumption that open classroom teaching means "let the kids do whatever they want." Done well, the open classroom requires both careful attention to the needs and desires of children and active contribution of ideas and guidance from the teacher. That means a sophistication, understanding, and depth of knowledge which few teachers possess and which even the best of consultants can't provide in a few months of school visits.

If psychologists are to have a significant impact in promoting the spread of open education in this country, they can contribute a great deal in the area of pre-service training. Child development and educational psychology, as they are often taught in teacher preparation programs, bear little relation to the realities of classroom life (Sarason, Davidson, & Blatt, 1962). There is a need for more effort to design courses in these subjects which will emphasize the application of theory and research to real-life encounters with children. Psychologists with interests in education can also play a role in constructing pre-service programs which allow teachers to experience firsthand the kinds of scientific, artistic, mathematical, literary, musical, dramatic and other activities which they would be encouraged to try out with their children. Vito Perrone's exciting teacher preparation program at the University of North Dakota's Center for Teaching and Learning (formerly called the New School for Behavioral Studies in Education) could be a model for this type of teacher preparation in communities throughout the country (Perrone & Strandberg, 1971; Silberman, 1970, Ch. 11).[8] Psychologists can also help in running sensitivity training and personal growth groups to help prospective teachers become more aware of their feelings, their styles of interaction with others, their relation to authority figures, and other aspects of interpersonal communication vital to successful open classroom work.

As important as the need for improved pre-service training is, though, I do not mean to suggest that in-service training and consultation is any less important. Teachers need all the support--through workshops, after-school courses, and in-school consultation--they can get. There are, in fact, many teachers already employed in schools who completed their pre-service training long ago but still feel motivated to learn and change. The growth of the Teacher Center movement in recent

years has proven that teachers will give up a considerable amount of their free time to attend workshop sessions and share ideas with each other on ways to improve and "open up" their teaching (Bailey, 1971; Devaney & Thorn, 1975; Feiman, 1975; Shanker, 1973; Spitzberg, 1973; Syracuse Project, 1974).[9] Psychologists can do much to contribute to the programs of such centers and/or to facilitate the creation of new centers by school systems or teacher groups.

In any work with teachers interested in moving toward open education, it is important to have a clear image of precisely what it is that the teachers are moving toward. The large number of vivid depictions of good open classroom practice which now exists both in print and on film can be extremely helpful in clarifying for the consulting psychologist the kinds of classrooms which can result when teachers are sufficiently interested, motivated, educated, and supported to create them. But it is also important that consultants and teachers alike have clear images of the sorts of transitional classrooms, somewhere on the continuum between traditional and open, which can be created. Marilyn Hapgood argues persuasively for such transitional classrooms in her 1971 Saturday Review article, "The Open Classroom: Protect it from its Friends," and I have now seen enough classrooms which moved "too far too fast" to believe ever more strongly that teachers need to move gradually towards their ideal "openness" or risk being drowned in classroom chaos. As Hapgood says, "If teachers can move into a classroom that offers them security at the same time it offers the students enrichment, everyone will have gained....As the teacher becomes more skillful and the children more acclimated, more and more can be attempted without the threat of disaster."

The school in which I consulted in Oldtown was in an early transitional stage when I began my work in it, and it was still in an early

transitional stage when I left. Although I did not succeed in achieving my goal of transforming the school into a paragon of open classroom practice, I realize that my major mistake was not in the means I chose to reach my goal, so much as in the over-ambitiousness of the goal itself. The teachers with whom I worked lacked a great deal in terms of training, motivation, and a working environment truly conducive to innovation, and I entered their system with extremely limited resources. It was therefore unreasonable to expect major transformations in the life of the school to ensue in the one brief year I consulted there. I do feel, though, that I was successful in encouraging the teachers to think more about their teaching, about their children's learning styles, and about the general atmosphere which pervaded the school. Whatever modest gains I may have made during the time I worked in the school, my hope is that those teachers continued thinking and growing after I left.

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Footnotes

[1]In the intervening years, a large number of books describing aspects of open education have been published. Among the best of these are: Barth (1972), Fisher (1972), Hassett & Weisberg (1972), Hertzberg & Stone (1971), Marsh (1972), Murrow & Murrow (1971), Nyquist & Hawes (1972), Rathbone (1971), Silberman (1973), Stephens (1974), Weber (1971), and the 23-volume series Informal Schools in Britain Today (1971). The now well-publicized Plowden Report on primary education in England (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967) remains one of the best-written and insightful descriptions of the rationale, philosophy, and methodology of the "integrated day" or "open classroom" approach.

[2]In an in-depth interview study of open classroom teachers in Westchester County, N. Y., Singer (1973) obtained data which confirm my impression that such teachers feel strong needs for training and consultative help.

[3]Newman has since published a book in which she too emphasizes the usefulness of group work with teachers (Newman, 1974).

[4]The notion of psychological consultant as provider of in-service training is not a new one. See, for example, McDaniel & Ahr (1965).

[5]Several other American Advisory programs, supported variously by private foundations, school systems, and universities, are described in Devaney (1974). Good descriptions of the rationale behind the Advisory approach may be found in Pursley (1972), Rathbone (1970), and Yeomans (1972).

[6]Barth (1972), Devaney (1974), Hassett & Weisberg(1972), and Hertzberg & Stone (1971) all devote entire chapters of their books to discussing new roles for the school principal in fostering the development of open education.

[7]Stringer (1961) points out that organizations frequently harbor the hope that their consultant will (1) speak as an oracle and (2) tell them exactly what they want to hear. Usually the consultant can't do this, but then he has to either not speak as an oracle, which disconcerts and disappoints the consultees, or speak as an oracle but tell them what they don't want to hear, which angers them. I concur with Stringer's observation that the "oracular role" is sometimes difficult to reject.

[8]The summer workshops on the integrated day sponsored by the National Association of Independent Schools and described in Yeomans (1969) provide an equally impressive, though shorter-term, model for developing the skills and understanding of open classroom teachers through active encounters with classroom materials and artistic self-expression.

[9]Several English writings are also noteworthy for the light they shed on the rationale and growth of the teacher center movement. Among these are Pryke (1970), Schools Council (1967), and Thornbury (1973).